

Conclusion. Civil involvement in refugee protection: reconfiguring humanitarianism and solidarity in Europe

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Introduction

Since 2015 and the advent of the notion of Europe's migration crisis, much attention has been paid to the effect of transnational mobility on receiving countries and host societies. One of the main focuses of the related debates has been on the presumed fears triggered by the presence of new refugees on European territory. Critical scholarship on migration and refugee movements has long analysed the process of securitisation of migration and asylum, whereby human mobility is represented primarily as a security concern calling for particular containment and control responses (Huysmans 2000, 2006; Bigo 2000, 2002, 2005). While this is not a new phenomenon, the renewed attention that has been paid to migratory events in the last few years has led to a recrudescence of discourses of threat around migration. However, while such discourses have tended to dominate the public and media debate around migration and asylum, other forms of responses have also characterised the way in which citizens and residents of the European Union have reacted to transnational mobilities.

In particular, the long summer of migration of 2015 witnessed the emergence of numerous solidarity initiatives towards people on the move, as perhaps most strikingly exemplified with the "Refugees Welcome" movement. From Barcelona to Munich, Paris to Athens, and as far as Istanbul or London, the emblematic logo of the movement now adorns walls and public buildings, as sections of national societies insist on publicising their openness and hospitality towards those fleeing war and persecution and seeking refuge in Europe (see Povrzanović Frykman and Mäkelä – this volume). These large-scale mobilisations are often connected to, and articulated with, practical local initiatives in support of refugees. Such situated practices of solidarity evolve in shape and content depending on particular situation and needs (see Witkowski, Pries and Mratschkowski in this volume). This book is dedicated to such initiatives and to trying to understand their emergence, structures and meaning(s). By bringing together a broad range of empirical cases from across Europe, the volume also addresses the question of what and how have these practices changed for traditional regimes of asylum and protection.

As illustrated in its articles, solidarity with refugees in contemporary Europe endorses many forms. It may mean assisting people through transnational journeys (Feischmidt and Zakarias; Župarić-Iljić and Valenta in this volume); providing intensive, long-term support to newly arrived individuals and families (Schiff and Clavé-Mercier; Scheibelhofer; Asztalos Morell; Karakayali; Turinsky and Nowicka in this volume); or developing solidarity work in unstable contexts, characterised by the immobilisation of people hoping to continue their journeys or by obstacles in terms of access to rights and residency (Vandevoordt and Verschraegen, this volume). Solidarity responses have in this sense been shaped by their local and national contexts. A range of factors come to impact on the form and messages taken by solidarity movements, including the nature of migratory movements these movements set out to support (in particular whether people aim to transit or to settle, with important consequence for movement's organisation, strategies and framing) as well as the particular histories of

migration and social movements in different sites across Europe (which often require the mobilisation of different symbolic material in the framing of solidarity activities). The articles collected in this edited volume make a strong contribution to mapping the various shapes and structures taken by pro-refugee mobilisation, and to developing a comparative assessment of the meanings and processes of solidarity across Europe.

This book also explores a broader postulate regarding the specificity of recent pro-refugee mobilisation. While forms of support towards, and joint struggles with, migrants and refugees have long histories, which have not always been appropriately recorded, the articles collected in this volume raise the question of the novelty of the present situation. They pay careful attention to some of the new features shared by these solidarities, and in particular examine the new constellations of actors involved in providing assistance and support to people on the move or stranded at Europe's peripheries. Indeed, these forms of what may be coined "vernacular humanitarianism" have in large parts relied on the (overwhelmingly unpaid) involvement of lay people, volunteers and activists, often operating outside or in tangential relations with official structures as provided by states and international organisations. The mobilisation of local populations along migratory routes was also oftentimes complemented by the arrival of international volunteers, who use their ability to travel across Europe to move to the particular spaces that seem in most urgent need of support. The participation of a variety of social actors in providing support to people on the move is not as such a new phenomenon. Since the tightening of the European borders in the mid-1980s, forms of volunteerism and activism denouncing "Fortress Europe" and its human consequences, and offering assistance to people attempting to reach European territories, have multiplied. However, the last few years have brought a quantitative shift to these initiatives, which have rapidly evolved in scope and in visibility.

This evolution has brought new dimensions to the field of protection. In particular, the 'local helper' and the 'international volunteer' have emerged as two central figures of this field, which have of yet received limited scholarly attention and have not been the subject of a broader comparative academic approach. In the articles collected in this volume, scrutiny has been paid to these actors in order not only to comprehend the ways in which these new protagonists practice solidarity or humanitarian work, but also to assess how their involvement comes to (re-)shape or (de/re-)stabilise traditional systems of refugee protection. Indeed, the dominance of state agencies, international organisations and national NGOs as administrators of support and care for refugees and asylum seekers that has characterised and structured 'humanitarianism' as a field and a practice for the last six to seven decades cannot anymore be taken for granted. In several European contexts, ever-larger numbers of people find support, accommodation and everyday protection through informal structures organised by civil groups and activists, rather than in the camps managed by the state, NGOs and the UNHCR. Even where the state retains the main organisational role, the growing involvement of (and reliance on) volunteers and non-professional actors to provide assistance to newly-arrived refugees has signalled a temporally significant shift with potential longstanding impact in the practices and habits of care provision (see Schiff and Clavé-Mercier in this volume).

The articles in this volume carefully unpack these issues in relation to a range of local and national contexts, and examine important questions regarding the changing nature and structures of protection and the role of the state towards people in need. They also propose careful examinations of these new humanitarian and solidarity actors, the ways in which they enrich and impact on the field of refugee protection, as well as the tensions, dilemmas and

limitations they face. In this conclusion, we would like to bring together the nuanced and multi-layered contributions presented in this volume in order to explore their implications for three particular issues - or more specifically in order to explore their implications for rethinking three key areas related to refugee support.

First, we will discuss the way in which these new actors and practices invite us to *rethink protection*, with a focus on how they challenge traditional understandings of the subjects and objects of the protection regime. Indeed, the urgent question these non-state led initiatives bring to the fore is: “who is now able and willing to grant protection, and how does this affect whom can access protection?” The second point developed in this conclusion may be labelled *rethinking humanitarianism and solidarity*. Humanitarianism has long been considered by critical literature and activist circles as a field strongly associated with top-down structures and state-centred practices. The intensive involvement of a range of new actors, including people with activist background and political biographies, in providing support of a humanitarian nature to refugees thus has important implication both for the humanitarian field, which boundaries are being contested and redrawn, and for pro-refugee activism which is being reshaped through its involvement in practices traditionally looked down upon. The tensions and dilemmas these new connections bring to the fore are also explored in this volume (for example by Vandevordt and Verschraegen) Finally, the conclusion would like to offer further reflection on a theme that traverses most if not all chapters of this volume, namely the relation between volunteer work, institutional structures and state responsibility. While moved by moral and ethical imperatives towards providing (often life-saving) assistance to refugees, volunteers and civil society actors often feel reluctant to normalise these initiatives insofar as they oppose the idea of replacing the state seen as withdrawing its services from the most vulnerable groups. The link with a broader process of neoliberal and in certain cases by current illiberal reconfiguration of the state is thus a final point we will comment on.

Rethinking protection

In the last two to three decades, as aptly highlighted by Refugee Studies scholars, the current refugee protection regime that found its roots in the post-war period and in particular the 1951 Geneva Convention has oftentimes proven inadequate to deal with the nature of contemporary forced displacement – and more particularly with the needs of refugees fleeing situation of mass violence (Ager 1999, Marfleet 2006, Betts *et al* 2008, Gibney 2004). The arrival of large numbers of people on European territories in the last few years was another occasion when the limitations of the international and European protection systems were evidenced. To these shortcomings must be added the particular logic of European refugee management, based on organised non-responsibility (Pries 2017) or externalisation of asylum (Hyndman and Mountz 2014) through mechanisms such as the Dublin Convention or the identification of so-called safe third-countries. These processes often have, as a declared or implied objective, the confinement of people in need of protection (and of the associated responsibilities) to the European (internal and external) peripheries. The combination of these dynamics effectively led to a situation where important numbers of people seeking to claim asylum in safer European countries were stranded in various sites between their desired destinations and their points of departure, often with limited or no official support coming from states. It is in this overall conjuncture that the thousands of civilians whose efforts and solidarity have been explored in the articles of this volume stepped forward to provide assistance to those in need.

Within this broader context, in the making for a number of decades, the year 2015 also saw the emergence of more complex situations, with states such as Germany (temporarily) enacting a more inclusive approach to refugees while calling for the involvement of the country's citizens and residents to complement official protection efforts. How have these recent developments impacted on the field of refugee protection?

Who cares and why? Old and new agencies in the field of migrant solidarity

A first observation concerns the heterogeneity that characterises the field of support of and solidarity with refugees. Over the summer 2015 (as illustrated by Feischmidt and Zakarias and Karakayali in this volume) broad coalitions of actors came together in sometimes innovative way to organise material support for travellers. On the one hand, people with no or little previous experience of social and political activities mobilised, often spontaneously using social media and informal means of communication to organise collective responses in support of refugees. This was strikingly manifested along the 'Balkan route' as discussed in several articles in this volume (first of all Župarić-Iljić and Valenta). On the other hand, social movements and grassroots civic organisations, as well as numerous non-profit and welfare associations, affiliated with churches, political parties or even national welfare institutions, which had been previously active around other issues (homelessness, gender equality, anti-racism among others) also stepped forward to help people on the move. Other important social actors that should be underlined were groups formed by migrants that have been long-term residents of European countries, or people with older migratory backgrounds who were for some born in Europe and are citizens of EU member states, who mobilised in large numbers to provide assistance to arriving refugees in their own countries or along migratory routes. Finally, since the summer 2015, we have witnessed an increase in the participation of various corporate actors (including companies such as Google, Apple, IKEA, as well as large retailer brands) to the refugee protection sector, mostly through financial support and donations.

These new actors came to broaden the ranks of a subterranean transnational, pro-migrant movement that has been in the making for two to three decades. With the gradual closing of Europe's borders and the tightening of its asylum system since the mid-1980s or early 1990s, an ever-increasing number of people seeking protection have been immobilised at various points of their journeys or left without the means for most basic survival. This has led to the emergence of informal camps where people live in often-degrading conditions around European territory. Such points of fixation have also had the effects to visibilise the human consequences of European asylum and migration policies. This visibility has had a range of effects, including the emergence of solidarity structures and pro-migrant groups across the EU. From Lampedusa to Calais, from Lesbos to Ceuta and Melilla, struggles for the right of people to access asylum and against the brutality of borders have multiplied over the last two to three decades. These struggles often emerge in relation to particular migratory events, and in this sense have an episodic rather than linear dimension. Yet their accumulation over time and the development of pools of actors and of sites of particular intensity in relation to migration solidarity has also led to the gradual formation of an increasingly transnational pro-migrant social movement. Similarly to what was witnessed over the summer 2015, these mobilisations often brought together a diverse range of actors, including local residents and at times authorities, international activists travelling to particular sites in solidarity, national and international NGOs and faith-based groups sometimes embedded in transnational religious organisations able to channel aid towards particular situations. However, the rapid increase in

scope and volume that such initiatives experienced in the last few years is bringing deep change to the meaning and structure of protection regimes, as these relatively new actors have gained in importance and weight, and cannot now be excluded from conceptualisations and typologies of protection regimes and humanitarian aid.

Various chapters in the current volume have focused on the way in which older humanitarian and welfare institutions has been reconfigured in more concrete terms. Witkowski *et al* for example examine how the institutions of asylum and refugee protection along the Mediterranean Sea have reshaped their structure emphasising international cooperation and common responsibility despite divergent legitimising norms and values. Other chapters have explored how current institutions and methods of social work organised at the national level became affected by the transnationalisation of their clientele and the appearance of volunteers with moral commitment in the field where they had professional experiences. Fast and thorough change did not only affect older institutions. Several chapters look at how volunteers and civil groups were also faced with numerous challenges, including those related to institutionalisation, the need for more structure and authority in decision-making and to division of labour (Turinsky-Nowicka in this volume). Other obstacles included the experience of declining commitment and of waning enthusiasm raising issues regarding sustainability and resource management. The issue of professionalization of volunteerism, but also of a tendency for the field to be de-professionalised through the involvement of untrained volunteers, are thus important concerns of the volume.

Going a step further, this volume also contributes to the emerging scholarship that attempts to better understand these new actors. Shortly after the summer 2015, a number of academic publications set out to examine the social profile and characteristics of volunteers and activists. A range of observations was put forward: refugee solidarians tend to be more educated; there are more women than men; and people with migrant background feature in high proportion (see Karakayali in this volume). In the vein of such research, Karakayali in this volume offers new data sets to further our quantitative understanding of this phenomenon in the German context. However, he mobilises quantitative data in order to strengthen a qualitative exploration into the motivations and politics of volunteers. This concern with understanding and analysing volunteers' own perceptions and rationales regarding their solidarity actions is reflected in several contributions to the volume. Some chapters examine volunteers' biographies and observe the ways in which pre-given ideas of "doing good" may be connected to life experiences and narratives. They also investigate how such processes participate in creating perceptions of the moral self and the deserving other. Subjectivity, which would remain unimportant from an institutional perspective, becomes illuminating here. Nevertheless this is not overemphasising the individual and emotional dimension, not calling for embracing an anti-structuralist position. Intimate solidarity for example (a term used by Scheibelhofer in this volume to refer to refugee-sponsor relations) is not hindering perceptions of and connections with broader social structures. Quite the opposite, Scheibelhofer shows the links between personal experience and social awareness, and how the experience of intimate solidarity often leads to an increasing sense of structural racism and power inequalities in society.

Who can receive protection and who can grant it?

An important observation concerns the tensions and differences that exist between the underlying rationales and logics at work in the novel and multi-layered constellation of actors

involved in various ways in refugee protection. At both ends of the spectrum, one could highlight the contradiction between, on the one hand, offering refuge and protection as an ethical imperative based on notion of solidarity and hospitality and, on the other hand, the regimented system of administering refuge that has come to characterise the institutional asylum system. While these two ideologies of protection represent different ideal-types, the articles in this volume also show that the reality of social and civil mobilisation in favour of refugees is often more nuanced and complex, with a range of motives and understandings animating individuals involved in providing assistance. While some more politicised forms of solidarity clearly act in rejection of state-centred categorisation and compartmentalisation of refugees, in other instances volunteers struggle to navigate a space where universal notions of hospitality and institutionalised understandings of protection are in tension and sometimes in contradiction.

In places, this tension signals the emergence of a novel cycle of social and political protest where asylum becomes a site of struggles. Indeed, in many European contexts, mobilisation in favour of refugees and against the increasingly securitised system of asylum and protection management has become key points of convergence for segments of the political left. (In the German context see Karakayali in this volume, the Swedish context see Povrzanovic-Frykman and Makela) This is also not an entirely new social event. In the 2000s already, European social movements engaged with the issue of borders and protection. The first edition of the European Social Forum in Florence in 2001 held a session against the illegalisation of migrants and the restrictive nature of the European asylum system. While a couple of decades ago such mobilisations were overwhelmingly centred around Mediterranean members of the EU, such as Italy or Spain, the externalisation of border controls, as well as recent changes regarding the routes used by refugees (often in direct correlation with the deployment of new forms of controls making older routes too dangerous or unusable), have brought the issue of asylum and international protection to virtually all member states of the EU.

In practice, the tension between forms of refuge provision is visible first of all in the way in which volunteers and solidarians often extend support that subverts the logics of the official national protection regimes. Over the summer 2015, volunteers in Hungary (Feischmidt and Zakarias in this volume) and Croatia (Župarić-Iljić and Valenta in this volume) worked against the official asylum framework by facilitating people's movement. Vandevoordt and Verschraegen importantly show the dilemma faced by volunteers in Brussels they call "subversive humanitarians" in respect to the categories of migration put forward by states and underpinning the refugee regime. They illustrate the way in which solidarity initiatives in Belgium refuse to reproduce the separation and classification through which the state's asylum regime hierarchises and administers refugees, referring rather to their own popular ethics and sense of moral in order to provide a more extensive form of support to people in need. A particularly striking point in relation to the summer of 2015 is however the fact that states themselves found themselves in an awkward position regarding frameworks governing asylum. As seen in the case of Hungary and Croatia, along migratory routes, states themselves oscillated between accommodating refugees' demands for onward movement and deploying repressive strategies to immobilise people.

The fact that in the vast majority of cases volunteers providing support to people on the move did so without feeling the need to check people's individual stories or statuses marks another important difference with the logics and ideologies animating state provision of protection. If we use the notion of 'prefiguration' this leads us to ask whether "another protection regime

is possible” – and perhaps already enacted through some of these solidarity initiatives. While the volume could not explore in detail the situation in Greece, the emergence since 2015 and 2016 of self-organised refugee accommodation spaces (particularly in Athens) promising better living conditions than official camps for several thousands of people, indeed shows that volunteers and solidarians are putting into practice an alternative imagination of protection, centred on the needs of refugees themselves. One where protection is broader and where the right to receive protection responds to different logics than those articulated through the institutional asylum regime. A few years after the ‘crisis’ of 2015, it is striking to see this alternative logic spreading to more countries, as recently illustrated with the occupations of several universities to ‘create a better refugee reception system’ across France. While not claiming to replace states’ regimes as such, these practices do show however that there exist claims to a right to care (to provide and receive care), and that these claims often go beyond the framework determined by states and accredited agencies. In fact what seems striking is that when laypeople mobilise in support of refugees, the association between the notion of protection and those of compassion, hospitality and solidarity are reinforced. Yet again, nuances and tensions emerge. As shown in the articles collected in this volume, the relation between activists/volunteers and the state can be more complex. It is often one that is both confrontational and cooperative depending on sites and times. Moreover, while challenging to an extent the logics of the official asylum regime, volunteers and activists may also activate other logics of deservingness, and produce categories that separate between people – a process that also requires examination (Vandevoordt and Verschraegen in this volume). Finally the new professional-volunteer subjects that came into existence through the enactment of practices of care and support also deserve assessing (Schiff and Clave-Mercier in this volume).

Rethinking Solidarity

Refusing politics or producing new ways of being political?

Critical approaches to charity and humanitarian aid have examined how their focus on ‘suffering subjects’ and compassion contributes to privatising responsibilities and divert attention from politics and public responsibilities (Ticktin 2011, Fassin 2012, Malkki 1996, 2015). Scholars of volunteerism also emphasise a demarcation between volunteering and activism: one way in which this distinction has been conceptualised is by defining volunteerism as targeting people, and activism as targeting structures. Musick and Wilson (2007) thus claim that “the activist changes while the volunteer maintains”. In another words, much of the critical scholarship about humanitarianism and volunteerism emphasises their apolitical nature. In the present moment however, it seems that this insistence in strictly delineating between volunteerism and activism (or between material aid and politics) might be limited to understand the social realities structuring the field of refugee protection. While acknowledging the depoliticising effects of humanitarianism as an institutional field, the irruption of new actors in the sphere of refugee protection, who often work in a grey area between formality and informality, raises new questions.

The classic argument in support of humanitarian approaches argues that the moral legitimacy of humanitarian action derives from the separation of immediate care and protection from politics (Barnett 2014, Vandevoordt and Verschraegen in this volume). Nevertheless, as Turnisky and Nowicka argues in this volume through the case of the volunteers from a

neighbourhood in Berlin, the ‘humanitarian frame’ can be mobilised and understood as a counterbalance to exclusionary and securitizing discourses, which produces a particular configuration of political and de-politicised motivations and can at times produce a space where a combination of the two is possible. Here, as highlighted in other chapters and the introduction, the broad and diverse scope of actors involved in the refugee movement of 2015 led to a number of ambiguities. In the case of the Berlin volunteers, the configuration of diverse actors was articulated around notions of cosmopolitanism - which value cultural difference, proclaim a moral commitment to all humans and reach beyond humanitarian first aid in order to contribute to the imagination of an inclusive and multicultural city.

Other empirical cases compiled in this volume are also less concerned about strict binaries, and prefer examining the fluid boundaries between volunteerism and activism and the transformative effects of solidarity. Rather than starting from rigid notions of fixed identities, the chapters here pay careful attention to the way in which practicing solidarity shapes people’s perception of themselves and of the social world(s) they inhabit, thus proposing a more nuanced and dynamic accounts of solidarians’ experiences and politics. Asking the question of the connection between practices of care and politics is in line with approaches advocated by Boltansky or Eliasoph. Boltansky for example distinguish between two types of reactions to witnessing ‘distant suffering’: a sentimental response and a sense of indignation. The latter, he claims, is inherently political. While this is an important conceptual contribution, empirical investigations in this volume also show that both feelings can be simultaneously experienced to different degrees, and that the experience of one may lead to the other. A similar approach has been suggested by Eliasoph, who argues that ‘caring about people’ effects how we think and talk about moral and social responsibilities – in this sense, practices of care can affect politics and political identities.

According to empirical evidences presented in the current volume, volunteers in migrant solidarity action in 2015 and afterwards often saw their engagement not only as a way to provide first aid and shelter for refugees but also as a means to oppose migrants’ social exclusion and the securitising political context. Previous investigations among German volunteers have found that a vast majority of them view their engagement as a statement against racism and xenophobic tendencies (Hamann and Karakayali 2016, Karakayali in this volume). One also finds a significant number of groups who apart from offering concrete help to refugees, engage in campaigns against the anti-migrant politics articulated by various social and political actors (first and foremost rising far-right parties) and provide support for the self-organisation efforts of refugees. Moreover, volunteers who have assisted refugees in their legal process of asylum seeking and have witnessed the tremendous efforts deployed by refugees to obtain access to society (in terms of language, work and housing) also raised the awareness of certain sections of the middle class in Germany or Austria (see Schreiberhofer in this volume) about institutional racism, which harbours the possibility of new alliances of solidarity.

The authors of the paper on the Hungarian volunteers and their social support put forward two key concepts that help thinking through the relation between ‘charity’ and ‘politics’. On the one hand, they identify a process of ‘politicisation of charity’ that relies on a “widening reflection on responsibilities, conflicts and agencies”. On the other hand they propose the notion of ‘charitisation of politics’ whereby certain actions understood previously as apolitical are enacted by social actors in a political way. A very similar conversion was depicted by Vandervoordt and Verschraegen in the Belgian context. They suggest conceptualising the transformative power of humanitarian aid as ‘subversive humanitarianism’, defined as a form

of moral responsibility that acquires a political character because of its opposition to the dominant securitising politics or lack of responsibility towards asylum seekers. This transformation does not happen without conflicts: rather it involves strong dilemmas regarding issues such as whether to prioritise personal or structural needs, whether (and how) to preserve the grassroots character of the solidarity groups or to move towards professionalisation; and what relationship to develop toward professional actors who have at least partially abandoned the scene. Beyond the local context described by Vandervoordt and Verschraegen, such questions are part of a broader set of reflections that structure and characterise volunteers' engagement in protection in various sites across Europe. Transnational networks of volunteers have created new spaces for critical thinking at the European level, in ways that challenge static or binary views of civic initiatives.

Though contributions to the current volume share the overall position that most volunteers had political motivations, or retrospectively granted a political dimension to their activities, they also allow examining the importance of local and national contexts in shaping the structure and targets of political understandings of refugee support work. In the Hungarian context, volunteers considered their involvement as political yet they only partly interpreted their actions in relation to refugees themselves. Rather, Hungarian volunteers emphasised the intentions of displaying messages towards the Hungarian society and public. That is, though helping actions were concretely directed towards refugees, they were also and even primarily targeted at influencing public opinion, enlarging social solidarity and strengthening the values of volunteering in the Hungarian society. The lack of a more equalitarian and political recognition of refugees was identified by other analysts of the Hungarian case, which pointed out to the as vertical relationship of solidarity initiatives (Kallius *et al* 2016).

Politics of solidarity and the production of new political subjectivities

Besides the issue of the political nature of volunteering, the question of the extent to which these solidarities carry the possibility of redefining politics or political communities must also be considered. A number of points need examining. First, as commented on previously, the withdrawal of the state (to varying degrees) across Europe has participated in weakening the institutionalised demarcation and categories used to regiment and separate people. In some contexts, the partial retreat of the state from providing care to refugees has led to civil involvement to protect non-citizens, which in turns participate in destabilising the limited imagination of community associated with state-centred politics. In many cases, civil society groups actively reimagined the boundaries of community and of belonging through civic engagement, thus challenging representations of civic and political communities premised on strict distinction between their “inside” and their “outside” (the “us” and “them” of the nation-state).

Also of importance, refugee solidarity initiatives can allow the articulation and formulation of new discourses regarding moral responsibility, civic values and political communities. Where states fail to live up to certain standards of hospitality and dignity, citizens and residents have not only stepped in, but also upheld certain standards related to the meaning of collective existence and polity. In doing so, certain claims were laid regarding the nature of political communities and the duties generated by political membership. Against the politics of exclusion that have risen across Europe in recent years, laypeople have shown through practice that forms of being togetherness based on mutual help and support were possible.

A last important question is how solidarity itself changes when it ‘humanitarianises’. In many contexts, previous forms of pro-refugee involvement were keen on distinguishing themselves from humanitarian structures precisely because of its perception as a top-down field entertaining awkward relations to more politicised approaches. In that sense, the issues of horizontality, equality and non-charity have been central themes to migration-related solidarity in a broad sense, including that centred around access to asylum and refugee rights. The conditions under which large numbers of people have been arriving over the course of the summer 2015 and beyond have brought into crisis such positions and potential attachments to an “ideological purity” insisting on non-material forms of actions. One way in which this is manifest, as observed by Greek anthropologist Rozakou regarding the changing nature of solidarity in Greece, is that the ‘gift taboo has collapsed’ (Rozakou 2016). Where giving and material aid used to be seen with suspicion by people and groups involved in politicised voluntary work with refugees, the last years have brought significant change. In situation of extreme hardship, the idea of giving and forms of material generosity have gained a central place in practices of solidarity, and have also been enacted by actors traditionally hostile to “humanitarian” type of relations.

In that sense, the involvement of large numbers of volunteers in the sphere of protection and humanitarian aid has implications for both parties: while the protection regime and its boundaries are being challenged, solidarity and its structure have also evolved. For Rozakou, this evolution could be dangerous insofar as “the egalitarian prospects of sociality that predominated in the 2000s is severely threatened or, certainly, transformed under the collapse of the gift taboo” (2016: 196). What the articles in this volume illustrate is the nuanced, multi-layered and critical discourses volunteers facing such situations have developed in order to make sense of and to reflect on this evolution. Vandevoordt and Verschraegen (this volume) as well as Turinsky and Nowicka show particularly well the ambiguities and contradictions faced by volunteers, whose political positions might not incline them towards such humanitarian postures, and propose a subtle rendition of their dilemmas, awareness and self-reflexivity.

The possibilities and the limits of the civic support of refugees

Yet, as has been noted in the introduction and throughout the articles, the relation between volunteerism/civil society and the state can also be apprehended from another set of questions. On the one hand, volunteer groups often developed an ambivalent link characterised by both opposition and cooperation with official authorities. On the other hand, the issue of replacing the state and providing services in its stead was a crucial point of contention for many groups, torn between the moral imperatives to assist those in need and their disapproval in front of the partial withdrawal of the state from public duties towards particular groups of people. Indeed, one might ask what it means when ‘civil society’ and unpaid volunteers step in order to ‘fill in the gap’ left by a resigning state? One of the most notable effects is the fragmentation of the field of protection, a responsibility which under the Geneva Convention and related texts is the duty and responsibility of the state. While there is much to laud in the often heroic initiatives of volunteers, one might wonder what are the causes and consequences of this devolution of responsibilities away from the state towards non-state professional actors and a voluntary public.

This must be assessed in the context of the neoliberalisation of the state, characterised by a privatisation of some of its functions, as well as in relation to the illiberal and authoritarian turn witnessed in certain European countries. These processes have led to a shift away from providing services previously assured by the public sector to certain groups, often those most in need. The resulting fragmentation creates new forms of marginalisation and exclusion, in reaction against which members of the public endorse the responsibility of becoming care providers. While this is clearly manifested in relation to the situation of asylum seekers and refugees, it is also experienced by other vulnerable groups in contemporary European societies. Refugees, but also homeless people, the poor and various minorities, have been the target of this selective withdrawal of services and protection. The question of responding appropriately to such developments has been a structuring component of volunteer's engagement.

Another important effect of the withdrawal of public services towards migrants and other vulnerable groups concerns the way in which it affects the definitions of protection and needs. When volunteers experience a process of institutionalisation and attempt to make their activities sustainable, they find themselves relying on funding often coming from various external sources. The way in which activities and values are defined in order to access such funding and to appeal to agencies willing to provide monetary support may (often does) lead to skewed senses of interest. Indeed, the priority becomes appealing to the agenda of particular agencies, rather than the needs and situations of people in need of protection. The definition of 'beneficiaries' and 'target groups' automatically create new categories and distinctions. It becomes necessary to identify criteria to determine who is worthy of protection and care, and this is also done in line with the norms and models of those agencies that are administering funds. The risk of reproducing some of the exclusionary tendencies and objectifying categories of the dominant humanitarian field is thus something that needs to be carefully considered by volunteers as their activities become institutionalised.

There are indeed limitations and tensions which will continue to interrogate this field, yet the volume has shown also that there is diversity, richness and hope in the initiatives under study. The question of their future remains.

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